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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
Chairman Doug Lamborn
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
At the Legislative Hearing on:

H.R. ____ (Hastings of WA), To establish in the Department of the Interior an Under Secretary for Energy, Lands, and Minerals and a Bureau of Ocean Energy, an Ocean Energy Safety Service, and an Office of Natural Resources Revenue, and for other purposes.
Thursday, September 15, 2011, at 9:30AM

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Today, we are considering a draft bill put forward by our Full Committee Chairman, Doc Hastings, to reorganize the agencies currently tasked with ensuring the safe and efficient development of our nation's offshore resources.

The Chairman's bill separates the former Minerals Management Service (MMS) into three distinct agencies with clearly defined missions. Additionally, the bill establishes a new Under Secretary of Energy, Lands and Minerals – a bold new idea that NOT ONLY would increase oversight, but ALSO would elevate the importance of safe and efficient energy development on our nation's public lands and waters.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement (BOEMRE) is finalizing their effort to reorganize operations by this October – a subject that this Subcommittee has already had an oversight hearing on in July. However, Secretary Salazar has expressed the need for an organic Act to establish these changes in statute, with clear missions and duties.

As we review this proposal today, I would remind everyone that this legislation has not been formally introduced. It is the intention of this Subcommittee to take full account of what we learn from our witnesses today and other experts as we craft a final bill.

We don't take this task lightly - the formation of organic legislation for an agency must be conducted with careful attention to the precedence of existing laws without bias, and paired with an understanding of the successes and failures at BOEMRE and the former MMS.

Drafting an organic Act is part of Congress's solemn duty to provide oversight of federal operations, and must include an expansive understanding of the agencies as they operate now – and how we want to improve their operations and accountability for future generations. This hearing is not about the merits of offshore energy development.

Rather, it is on how we can work together to ensure it is done efficiently and safely with the best return for the taxpayer. On that note I want to thank all of our witnesses for appearing today – I hope your full and fair analysis of the inner workings of the BOEMRE will be of great help as we work together to arrive at a final product.